

Message Text

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SUBJ: TRENDS IN THE SOUTHERN CONE

REF: STATE 171456

1. GOP RELATIONS WITH SOUTHERN CONE COUNTRIES CENTER ON THE HISTORIC RIVALRY WITH CHILE AND THE TRADITIONALLY FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP WITH BOLIVIA. CONCENTRATION ON INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS AND ITS OWN POLITICAL/IDEOLOGICALLY DISTINCT COUNTERPARTS IN COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTHERN CONE. GOP-SOUTHERN CONE RELATIONSHIPS BECAME MORE DIFFICULT FOLLOWING THE OVERTHROW OF ALLENDE IN CHILE, TORRES IN BOLIVIA, AND THE DECLINE OF PERONISM IN ARGENTINA. AS THE ONLY REMAINING LEFTIST REGIME IN THIS PART OF THE HEMISPHERE, THE MILGOV SUFFERS FROM SOME POLITICAL ISOLATION.

2. GOP FOREIGN POLICY UNDER VELASCO STRESSED PERU'S THIRD WORLD LEADERSHIP AT THE EXPENSE OF A COMPREHENSIVE LATIN AMERICAN POLICY. HOWEVER, PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ IN A MARCH 31 ADDRESS TO THE NATION REAPPRAISED PERUVIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND CALLED FOR A SHIFT IN PRIORITIES BASED ON "GEOPOLITICAL FACTORS". MORALES BERMUDEZ DECLARED THAT PERU WOULD "RE-DIRECT ITS VIEW TOWARD THE AMERICAN CONTINENT, SPECIFICALLY LATIN AMERICA, AND CONCENTRATE ON THE OAS, LAFTA, SELA AND THE ANDEAN PACT". A RECENT VISIT OF THE GOP NAVY

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MINISTER TO ARGENTINA AND A PROPOSED MEETING BETWEEN THE PERUVIAN

AND BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT SEEMED TO REFLECT THESE CHANGING PRIORITIES. THE GOP "RETURN TO LATIN AMERICA", IF IT IN FACT REPRESENTS A LONG-TERM TREND, MIGHT SERVE TO TONE-DOWN PERU'S THIRD WORLD POLICY AND RHETORIC AND COULD EVEN BE A MODERATING INFLUENCE ON THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE.

3. THE MOST SALIENT ISSUE INVOLVING PERU AND THE SOUTHERN CONE COUNTRIES CONTINUES TO BE THE STATE OF PERUVIAN/CHILEAN RELATIONS INCLUDING ARMS PURCHASES BY PERU, AND THE COMPLICATIONS INTRODUCED BY THE BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR QUESTION. THE EMBASSY WILL ADDRESS THESE ISSUES IN DETAIL IN A JULY 16 CABLE RESPONDING TO THE PRE-IG REVIEW OF THE FY77-78 CASP ON PERU.

4. REFUGEE PROBLEMS REPRESENT AN AREA OF TANGENTIAL PERUVIAN INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SOUTHERN CONE. PERU HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO ACT AS ANY MORE THAN A "WAY STATION" FOR POLITICAL REFUGEES, ESPECIALLY FROM CHILE. IN ADDITION TO ITS CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE EXCESSIVE CHILEAN PRESENCE HERE THE GOP HAS BEEN WARY OF POSSIBLE EXTREMIST POLITICAL INFECTION FROM REFUGEES AND OTHER PERSONS WHO VIEW THE PERUVIAN POLITICAL CLIMATE AS MORE FAVORABLE THAN THAT ENCOUNTERED IN THE SOUTHERN CONE AND WHO MAY CONSIDER PERU TO BE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THEIR MARXIST PROSELYTIZING. PERUVIAN EXTREMIST GROUPS LIKE THE MIR MAINTAIN SOME TIES WITH SIMILAR GROUPS IN THE SOUTHERN CONE. REPRESSION OF THESE ELEMENTS IN THE SOUTHERN CONE COULD BE REFLECTED IN A RE-DIRECTION OF THEIR EFFORTS TOWARD PERU. GOP SECURITY FORCES ARE AWARE OF THE PROBLEM AND IT IS BELIEVED THAT THEY MAINTAIN CONTACT AND EXCHANGE INFORMATION WITH SECURITY SERVICES IN SOUTHERN CONE COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY ARGENTINA.
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